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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2005

THIS REPORT PRESENTS THE TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES

BRIEFING

EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEAL

Sezer Will Go Ahead With Syria Visit - DB-Tercuman
Italy to Pull Out of Iraq - Milliyet
Iraqi Parliament Holds Historic First Session - Aksam
Iraqi Parliament Opens, But No Government Yet - Milliyet
Bush to Nominate Wolfowitz to Head World Bank - Hurriyet
US Troops Blamed for Killing 26 Captives in Iraq,
Afghanistan - Sabah
Armenians Pressure Bush to Recognize 'Genocide' - DB-
Tercuman

OPINION MAKERS

President Sezer Says He Will 'Definitely' Go to Syria - Radikal
Iran Proposes 'Partnership' to US - Cumhuriyet
More Than Half of Americans Oppose Iraq War - Cumhuriyet
EU Postpones Membership Negotiations With Croatia - Cumhuriyet
Armenians in US Push for Recognition of 'Genocide' - Radikal
Israel Hands Over Jericho to Palestinians - Yeni Safak
Pakistan's Nuclear Gesture for Rice - Yeni Safak
Family Wants Slain Leader Maskhadov's Body - Yeni Safak
Maskhadov's Successor Pledges Not to Attack Civilians - Zaman

BRIEFING

Controversy Over President Sezer's Trip to Syria: President Sezer said Tuesday that he would go ahead with a scheduled visit next month to Syria despite US concerns that it may send the wrong signal at a time when Damascus is under pressure to pull its troops out of Lebanon, papers report. Earlier this week, Ambassador Edelman urged Ankara to join the rest of the international community in pushing for a complete Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. Edelman noted that the decision about how to reflect the international consensus 'lies with Turkey.' The press interpreted these remarks as an effort by the US to pressure Turkey to cancel Sezer's upcoming visit to Syria. Ambassador Edelman said that his words had been distorted in many Turkish press reports and commentaries. FM Abdullah Gul said that Edelman's remarks on Turkish-Syrian relations 'had been reflected in a way that was not intended.' 'We see that a correction has already been made by the US Embassy,' Gul said. 'Besides,' he continued, 'Turkey is a country that has acted in tandem with the international community on the Syria issue.' Papers expect Sezer will to urge the Syrians to implement UN Security Council resolution 1559 by pulling all troops out of Lebanon.

Paper Interviews Walter Russell Mead: Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) member Walter Russell Mead responded to questions from the left-leaning/opinion maker "Cumhuriyet" on the phone from Washington. Mead said that a rise in Islamic consciousness in Turkey posed a challenge to the history of the modern republic. Mead stressed that it is important whether Turkey considers itself a bridge between Europe and the Middle East or a country looking to its south and east. The increasing presence of the United States, not only in Iraq but in the wider region, may have caused concerns in Turkey, and Kemalist Turks may have started thinking the US has started to side with the Muslim elements in their country, Mead said. He noted that many Iraqis had cast votes at the risk of their lives, thus indicating that they want democracy. Regarding speculation about the establishment of an independent Kurdish state, Mead said the US has always favored a united Iraq. 'A powerful Iraq to counter Iran is in the interests of the United States,' he recalled, underlining the fact that an independent Kurdish state would never serve US interests. 'Barzani and Talabani

have understood that they will have to work under an international framework,' Mead added. With powers such as Turkey, the US, and Iraq opposing a Kurdish state, Mead argued that it is 'highly doubtful' that Kurds will gain independence. He said he believes that autonomy for the Kurds inside a federal Iraq would be the most reasonable choice. Mead also claimed that Turkey's membership to the European Union would increase the rights of Kurds in Turkey.

Ankara Ready to Include New EU Members in Accord With EU: FM Abdullah Gul signaled that Turkey is ready to sign a supplementary protocol that will expand the scope of the Ankara Agreement to encompass the Greek Cypriot administration. In a statement to the BBC's Greek Service, Gul said Turkey will first initial the protocol and then submit it to the Turkish parliament for approval. 'We are not about to play games,' Gul noted. 'When Turkey makes a commitment, it fulfills it,' he added. Recognizing the fact that a reservation for non-recognition of Nicosia will not be included in the protocol, Ankara aims to exchange letters with the EU Commission noting Ankara's objection, or append the reservation to the new Accession Partnership Document which is to be announced by the end of this year. Analysts regard the European Union decision to postpone entry talks with Croatia over its failure to hand over a war crimes suspect as a powerful signal to Turkey and other prospective members, papers comment.

Minister Cicek in Jerusalem: Visiting Justice Minister and government spokesman Cemil Cicek delivered a speech on the second day of the opening of the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, "Yeni Safak" reports. Cicek said that anti-Semitism is a current that has to be defeated, and added: 'Anti-Semitism has not existed in the history of Turks, and it will not exist in our future.' Cicek noted that the Holocaust Memorial Museum is a reminder of one of the darkest periods in human history. 'Yad Vashem is not merely a place to mourn, but also a core for humanity,' Cicek said, warning that lessons should be taken from history so that the Holocaust will never be repeated.

PM Erdogan to Visit Israel: Israel's Ambassador to Ankara, Pinhas Avivi, has officially invited PM Erdogan to Israel, "Aksam" reports. Erdogan is also expected to visit Palestine during his visit to Israel, which is expected to happen in the second half of April.

Visiting AKP Lawmaker Urges More US Support: Visiting AKP deputy group chairman Faruk Celik, a member of the eight-member Turkish Parliamentary Committee for Democracy, told a meeting of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington that anti-American feelings in Turkey did not have deep roots, "Milliyet" reports. The negative view of the US seen among Turks can be reversed if the Bush Administration takes steps to remove the PKK presence in northern Iraq, Celik said. He complained that the Turkish government has not received enough support from the US with regard to Cyprus, despite the fact that Ankara had opted for reunification of the divided island.

Pro-Kurdish Party Prepares for 'Nevruz' Celebrations: The pro-Kurdish DEHAP (Democratic People's Party) has invited President Ahmet Necdet Sezer, Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc, and Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan as well as extreme nationalist MHP's leader Devlet Bahceli to Nevruz celebrations in Diyarbakir. Northern Iraqi Kurdish leaders Massoud Barzani and Jalal Talabani and the representatives of 50 countries are also invited.

Bill on Foreign Ownership of Turkish Media: The parliament endorsed a bill which will enable foreigners to own radio and television stations in Turkey. The opposition CHP and some deputies from the ruling AK Party criticized the bill. Opposing lawmakers said that foreigners owning national broadcasters would carry a huge risk, and claimed that under the new law the shaping of public opinion has been left to 'foreign forces.' According to the new law, foreigners for the first time will be allowed to own more than 25 percent shares of national channels.

EDITORIAL OPINION

US-Turkish Relations

"How to Improve US-Turkey Relations" Sami Kohen opined in the mass appeal "Milliyet" (3/17): "Whether we consider the state of US-Turkey relations as a 'crisis' or just some 'turbulence,' the fact is that this is a very serious period. If these provocative developments continue, the damage to relations will become impossible to mend. To improve relations, Washington and Ankara need to agree that better relations and cooperation are in the interest of both sides. At least at the moment, there is a will among both governments and official institutions to improve the relationship. The first step at the official level should be to begin a constructive dialog. Both sides

should intensify efforts to 'fine tune' the relationship without a further drop in mutual trust. During this process, administrations in the US and Turkey should study the reasons for the damaged relations and try to determine how their own mistakes may have contributed to this trend. NGOs should get involved in this process as well. There is no way to improve the relationship except through continuous dialogue and a calm diplomacy."

"Turkey's Preference"

Fehmi Koru commented in the Islamist-opinion maker "Yeni Safak" (3/17): "Turkey's sensitive balances in many areas depend on its relations with the US. While he was getting ready for a pre-scheduled official visit to Syria, President Sezer was warned not to go to Syria by the US Ambassador. What would you do if you were in Sezer's place? If this message had been given secretly through diplomatic channels, it wouldn't be too difficult to find a solution by acting in accordance with the US preference. But, as we can all see, the US is determined not to allow Turkey to use diplomatic options. The US warned Turkey openly and well in advance of the scheduled trip so that it would be known that the visit had been cancelled because of US pressure. The US offers two alternatives -- either ignore the US warning and go ahead with the visit, or listen to Edelman's warning and cancel the visit... What should Turkey's stance be in the face of this new US imperialist policy? If Turkey wants to follow a policy without the US, than the upcoming official visit to Syria will be an opportunity to announce this policy to the world. Watching next month's developments should be rather exciting."

"Sezer's Trip to Syria"

Mustafa Balbay wrote in the leftist-nationalist "Cumhuriyet" (3/17): What do you say the following scenario? Syria pulls out of Lebanon, but the US decides this isn't enough. Syria stays out, and Lebanon becomes unstable. Israel intervenes to fix this situation, while the US goes in to 'clean up' in Syria. In this way, Turkey's southern neighbors become the US and Israel! But these neighbors then need the water from their northern neighbor, so a joint US-Israeli initiative is launched to take the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates. Like I said, it's only a hypothetical scenario. Turkey's relations with Syria have followed a zigzag path. Relations were very poor in the 1980s and 1990s. Syria did not acknowledge that it was supporting terrorism. Turkey was telling Assad, 'the desert fox,' to hand over the terrorist leader or else. Assad's response: 'give me your water.' In 1998 when Ocalan was kicked out of Syria, a new period began. By the end of 1998 this period reached a new stage with the signing of the Adana Agreement. Syria began to support Turkey on every issue, including terrorism. Relations are improving - or at least they were. Sezer's trip to Syria brings to the forefront once again Turkey's new role in the region. There are two options for Turkey in defining its stance toward the United States -- it can be a satellite country, or it can oppose the US. Neither option is in the interest of Turkey. The sensible course would be to maintain a good relationship without resorting to any kind of dissimulation. Our neighbors are the US, Russia, Iran, and Syria - this is certainly not easy, especially along with being in the middle of the EU. It all brings to my mind what Napoleon once said: 'geography determines the fate of nations.'"

EDELMAN